

# Why Build a New Visitor Center?

**Basic problems with the existing Jackson Visitor Center's design** make it inefficient and difficult to maintain, incompatible with the rustic character of Paradise, and inconsistent with modern building codes. For these reasons, a new visitor center will be built to take its place. The roof was not built to withstand the fifteen to twenty feet of snow that bury everything in a typical winter. Consequently, an elaborate snow-melt system had to be installed in the roof to keep it clear. During the winter months it takes between 300 and 500 gallons of diesel fuel *per day* to heat the building and melt the snow off the roof. Repair of the snow-melt system, embedded in the roof, would require replacement of the roof which would be cost prohibitive. The snowmelt system risks the safety of park staff when they are required to manually remove snow from the roof. If the roof heating system failed, the existing visitor center could collapse under the snow load.

Paradise is part of a designated National Historic Landmark District, with historic architecture that fits the natural setting. The modernistic design of the Jackson Visitor Center is incompatible with other, more traditional, structures around it. It also no longer meets current building codes or accessibility guidelines. Its ramps are too steep, and there is no elevator.

Although the new visitor center will be smaller, it will serve visitors better. It will be a model of energy efficiency and new exhibits will interpret the natural features and cultural significance of Mount Rainier. A classic design and careful landscaping will blend the building into the natural and historic landscape, while plenty of windows will permit panoramic views of Mount Rainier and the Tatoosh Range.